

Vaak (spoken word), Akshar (alphabet)
&
Sristi (creation)

According to the Upanishads

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Language: English.

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According to the Upanishads

The great Kashmiri philosopher named Abhinavgupta has given a meticulous account of the relationship of the vowels and consonants of the Sanskrit language with the creation of the cosmos in his work ‘Tantrasaar’ and ‘Paratrishika Vivarana’.

Now, let us briefly and in a common-man’s language see the fundamental principles that govern the origin of the vowels and the consonants as well as their relationship with the creation of the world as outlined in these great works.

The Origin of the language—In the bowels of the infinite sky (Akash) is the ‘Bindu’, the ‘dot’ which represents the center of the cosmic bowl or the focal point of the cosmic mirror from where generates the first signs of cosmic vibrations, called the ‘Naad’.

The cosmic gel was not stagnant, and its being in a state of flux meant that there was an inherent movement in it. Movement, big or small, generates energy, and this is transformed into sound energy. The energy of the sound evolved in stages—first a simple ripple, followed by successive ripples overlapping and coalescing with each other to produce larger and stronger ripples of vibration.

The cosmic gel was contained in the bowl of the sky, and the center of this bowl containing the cosmic gel was where the first ripple appeared. This was the ‘Bindu’, the dot, the focal point of the cosmic bowl or mirror. Just like light produced at the focal point bounces off the surface of the mirror to be reflected in all the directions, this sound bounced off from its point of origin in the center of the gel and then bounced off against the surface of the sky to ultimately spread in all the directions in different amplitudes.

Ancient sages meditated into the origin of ‘Vaak’ or the phenomena of speech. They discovered that ‘speech’ in its original and primary form is ‘Paraa’ or beyond reach and comprehension, the ‘unperceived’ form of sound that corresponds to the ‘Absolute’. This primary form of sound rests in the ‘Mool’, or the root, which forms the basis of the rest of the sounds and its offshoot, the creation. It is also called ‘Moola-dhaar’ because it is the fundamental basis of the rest of things. This is the ‘Brahm’, the ‘Absolute’.

The second stage is known as ‘Madhya-maa’, meaning the middle one. This stage is still unperceived and nebulous.

The third stage is known as the ‘Pashyanti’, which means the stage after the first phase of being unperceived, i.e. the stage that is perceived. This stage is the ‘thought’ or ‘Vichaar’. The primary Absolute has now manifested and crystallized itself in the form of the ‘thought’.

And finally, this thought is expressed in the form of vocal or audible speech known as ‘Vaak’ or the spoken words. This stage is known as ‘Vaikhari’—expressed thoughts.

It will be noted that the ‘spoken word’ is the external form of the ‘thought’. While the thought (‘Vichaar’) is hidden in one’s mind and is not known to the outside world, the spoken word (‘Vaak’) reveals it to the world outside. These two forms of the sound are its grosser aspect that relates to the gross physical world.

On the other hand, the first two stages of sound, i.e. the ‘Moola-dhaar’ and the ‘Madhya-maa’, relate to the subtle world or the world beyond the gross of existence.

Now, to express the internal thoughts, vocal sound was needed, and thereby came into existence the guttural and the labial sounds. The phonetics of the Sanskrit language consists primarily of these two types of sounds, and they were later on given the names of the vowels and the consonants.

The vowels represent the primary forms of sound, the ‘Beej’ sounds because they are the ‘seeds’ from which are produced the rest of the sound vibrations known as the ‘Vyanjans’ or the consonants. The ‘Beej’ sounds were equated to ‘Shiva’, the Absolute, as well as to the vowels—because no compound word can be formed without them. The consonants are compared to the ‘Yoni’, the cosmic womb that had the ‘Shakti’ or the dynamism to form articulate sound-forms from the basic vowels. The two combined to form the ‘spoken word’ which, therefore, is a revelation of the combined power of Shiva and Shakti.

From the perspective of the creature, the so-called ‘womb’ or ‘Yoni’ is the ‘Mana’, the mind and the heart of the creature where all thoughts and emotions emerge at the micro level of creation. This creature, it must be

noted here, is a micro-cosmic counterpart of Brahm, the macro-cosmic form of Shiva and Shakti, the Absolute Being whose Consciousness is represented by the cosmic Naad.

Hence, the spoken word is an image of the cosmic Naad in its most vivid gross form, and the thought of the creature is its subtler form.

In its earlier stages, the language consisted of only the sounds that were either labial or the guttural. Then the tongue came into the picture to make the some of the components of the consonants more refined—e.g. the letter ‘Ta’ of the Sanskrit language which is the 16th letter of the consonant.

As civilization developed and a necessity of proper communication tool was felt, the primary sounds were grouped into ‘words’, and words into a structured form that gave birth to the ‘language’.

As we have seen above, there are four types of Vaak or the spoken word. (i) ‘Paraa’—the first type of speech which deals with the knowledge of that entity which is beyond perception and which cannot be seen; to speak about things which are beyond normal sight and knowledge; to speak about paranormal things that are beyond comprehension and range of perception. The knowledge enshrined in the Upanishads and Vedas dealing with the knowledge of the supreme, transcendental, eternal, imperishable and infinite Brahma, knowledge which can be known only by rising above the mundane plane of existence and acquiring spiritual powers which are collectively called ‘Paraa Gyan’. (ii) ‘Pashyanti’—the second form of speech refers to speaking about things that are visible, perceived and understandable. For example, seeing Brahm in the form of the physical world and narrating about this form of knowledge that is visible, tangible, accessible and verifiable. (iii) ‘Madhyama’—literally means ‘medium, median’. This refers to speaking softly and mildly, to speak pleasantly and sweetly, to speak inarticulately and in a low voice that is difficult to easily comprehend. It also refers to a speech that follows a medium, central path, not too extreme to the right or to the left. It can veer on either side according to circumstances, e.g. using words which have double-edged meaning. These words, for an example, can show vehement anger as well as can be used just to show mild reprimand or reproach. Similarly, they can show love and endearment which may have deeper and sincere meaning, or may be simply superficial. In the context of the Upanishad, it refers to the ‘median path to Brahma’, a path well-balanced and judicious, empirical and rationale. (iv) ‘Vaikhari’—that voice and sound which is loud, clear, robust and vigorous, symbolising clarity of thought, firmness of conviction, exemplary confidence, energy and vitality. It is an epithet for Goddess of speech, Saraswati.

These four types of speech have been described in *Saraswati Rahasya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 23. To quote—“The faculty of speech is divided by experts into four types or aspects—(1) Paraa (which refers to speaking about things which are beyond normal sight and knowledge, to speak about paranormal things that are beyond comprehension and range of perception); (2) Pashyanti (which refers to speaking about things that are visible, perceived and understandable); (3) Madhyamaa (to speak softly and mildly, to speak pleasantly and sweetly, to speak inarticulately and in a low voice that is difficult to easily comprehend); and (4) Vaikhari (to speak in a clear, loud and articulate way symbolising clarity of thought, firmness of conviction, exemplary confidence, energy and vitality).

Those who are experts and wise know all these aspects of speech. Out of these, the first three, viz. the Paraa, Pashyanti and Madhyamaa, are established in the cave-like heart. [This is to indicate that unless one is articulate in his speech, unless one speaks out loud and clear what he wants to say, and unless he is honest in whatever he speaks all his knowledge would remain confined to the deep cave of his heart, and the rest of the world would not be able to see what is hidden in this dark cave. No one would be able to know what is concealed in one’s heart if he is not honest and forthright in what he says.] They are not revealed.

Compared to them, the Vaikhari speech is loud and clear; it helps one to articulately say what is in his mind and heart. It is this fourth form of speech that is employed by a man to express himself (23).”

Refer also *Ganapati Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 6 which also mentions these four types of speech, albeit in the context of Lord Ganesh, as it says that all these four types of speech are manifestations of the Lord.

The vowels—As we have seen above, the “vowels represent the primary forms of sound, the ‘Beej’ sounds because they are the ‘seeds’ from which are produced the rest of the sound vibrations known as the ‘Vyanjans’ or the consonants. The ‘Beej’ sounds were equated to ‘Shiva’, the Absolute, as well as to the vowels—because no compound word can be formed without them.” The first sound represents the first vowel of the Sanskrit language, i.e. ‘A’ (pronounced as in *son*, *run*). This is called a silent vowel and is the basis of all sounds.

Its more dynamic and joyful form is the second vowel ‘Aa’ (pronounced as in *master*, *rather*).

As its energy and dynamism increases, the other successive vowels emerge—such as the third vowel ‘E’ (pronounced as in *if*), the fourth vowel ‘Ee’ (pronounced as in *eel*, *feel*, *kneel*), the fifth vowel ‘U’ or ‘O’ (pronounced as in *full*), the sixth vowel ‘Uu’ or ‘Oo’ (pronounced as in *boot*, *root*, *soot*), the seventh vowel ‘Ri’ (pronounced as ‘ree’ as in *regard*), the eighth vowel ‘Ae’ (pronounced as in ‘may’, ‘ray’), the ninth vowel ‘Aye’ (pronounced as in ‘rye’, ‘my’), the tenth vowel ‘O’ (pronounced as in ‘oh’, ‘go’, ‘oracle’), the eleventh vowel ‘Ou’ (pronounced as in ‘cow’, ‘now’), the twelfth vowel sound of ‘Ang’ (pronounced as in ‘among’), and finally the thirteenth vowel sound of ‘Aha’ (pronounced as ‘a-ha’).

It ought to be noted that the vowels are of two basic types—one with a short sound and the other with a long sound—e.g. the first vowel ‘A’ is of a short sound and its counterpart ‘Aa’ has a long sound. This applies to the rest of them, and they appear to form ‘couples’ of short and long sounds. [A and Aa, E and Ee, and O and Oo.]

It was conceptualized by ancient sages and seers that the vowel sounds with a shorter sound are like the Sun, and the ones with a longer sound are like the Moon. This is because just like the Moon depends upon the Sun for its light, the vowels with a longer sound depend upon and owe their existence to the vowels with the basic shorter sound. [For example, the second vowel ‘Aa’ relies on the sound of the first vowel ‘A’.]

When these fundamental sounds fuse, they produce the rest of the vowel sounds with the friction caused due to such fusion. [Ae and Aye, O and Ou, Ang and Aha.]

A very interesting observation was made by these ancient researchers of the language. The cosmic ‘Bindu’ was represented in the language by the ‘dot’ placed on the top of any letter symbolizing its supremacy. It was called the ‘Anuswara’. From its physical appearance this ‘Anuswar’ is a dot or a Bindu, and it signifies the ‘fusing point’ of the entire gamut of creation represented by Shiva and Shakti that have revealed themselves in the form of the vowel and consonant sounds of the alphabet. From metaphysical perspective it symbolizes the fusion of the individual Atma or soul of the creature with the cosmic Atma or the supreme Soul of this creation, known as Brahm. The Anuswar also stands for the ‘consciousness’ in the creature’s body—because it is from this focal point that the creature derives his life. It is the focal or the nodal point that is synonymous with life inside the body of the creature, for without the presence of the ‘consciousness’ the gross body is dead.

Another form of the Bindu is the ‘Visarga’ or two dots placed one on the top of the other as ‘:’. From its physical form also it represents the point

that separates the gross from the subtle level of creation as it separates two parts of a sentence. In other words, the Visarga symbolizes the separation of Shiva principle from the Shakti principle.

[The Sanskrit *vowels* are the following—‘A’ (अ); ‘Aa’ (आ); ‘E’ (इ); ‘Ee’ (ई); ‘U’ or ‘Oo’ (उ); ‘Uu’ or ‘Ooo’ (ऊ); ‘Ri’ (ऋ); ‘Ae’ (ए); ‘Aye’ (ऐ); ‘O’ (ओ); ‘Ou’ or ‘Aou’ (औ); ‘Ang’ (अं); ‘Aha’ (अः).]

The Consonants—The consonants are called ‘Sparsha’ class of letters. This is because they ‘touch’ upon the basic vowel sound of ‘A’ (अ) for their formation, and also because to pronounce them the air has to touch either the tongue or the lip.

As noted earlier in this discussion, the “consonants are compared to the ‘Yoni’, the cosmic womb that had the ‘Shakti’ or the dynamism to form articulate sound-forms from the basic vowels. The two combined to form the ‘spoken word’ which, therefore, is a revelation of the combined power of Shiva and Shakti.”

The consonants evolve from the guttural sound to the labial. In Sanskrit there are five groups of consonants, each having five letters. Therefore there are a total of $5 \times 5 = 25$ consonant letters. These 25 consonants represent the 25 ‘Tattvas’, or the fundamental elements of creation, according to the Sankhya philosophy.

The first group is headed by the consonant letter ‘Ka’ (pronounced as in ‘kerb’, ‘keen’). It has five letters in it—viz. Ka, Kha, Ga, Gha and Ang. They represent the five ‘Maha-Bhuts’ or the five primary elements of creation such as earth, water, fire, air and sky respectively. They are the guttural sounds. [These consonants are the following—‘Ka’ (क); ‘Kha’ (ख); ‘Ga’ (ग); ‘Gha’ (घ); ‘Ang’ (ङ).]

The second group is headed by the consonant letter ‘Cha’ (pronounced as in ‘church’, ‘chain’). It has five letters in it—viz. Cha, Chha, Ja, Jha and Ieya. They represent the five ‘Tan-Maatras’ or the five primary perceptions such as smell, taste, sight, touch and sound respectively. It will be noted that they also correspond to the earth, water, fire, air and sky elements in ascending order as listed earlier. [These consonants are the following—‘Cha’ (च); ‘Chha’ (छ); ‘Ja’ (ज); ‘Jha’ (झ); ‘Ieya’ (ञ).]

The third group is headed by the consonant letter ‘Ta’ (pronounced as in ‘ten’, ‘tool’). It has five letters in it—viz. Ta, Tha, Da, Dha and Ana. They represent the five organs of action known as the Karmendriyas’. They are the following—speech, hand, leg, excretion and generation. [These

consonants are the following—‘Tta’ (ट); ‘Tha’ (ठ); ‘Da’ (ड); ‘Dha’ (ढ); ‘Ana’ (अ).]

The fourth group is headed by the consonant letter ‘Tta’ (pronounced as in French ‘t’). It is pronounced with the help of the tongue, and therefore all the other letters of this group depend upon the use of the tongue. This fourth group also has five letters in it—viz. Tta, Tha, The, Dha and Na. They are in effect a variation of the third group of consonants and represent the five organs of perception known as the ‘Gyan-indris’. These five organs are nose, tongue, eye, skin and ear. They correspond to their five Tanmatras as listed under the second group. [These consonants are the following—‘Ta’ (त); ‘Tha’ (थ); ‘The’ (द); ‘Dha’ (ध); ‘Na’ (न).]

The third and the fourth group of consonants stand for the gross body of the creature which has five organs of action and five organs of perception.

The last is the fifth group which is headed by the consonant letter ‘Pa’ (pronounced as in French ‘pen’). It is pronounced with the help of the lip; they are labial sounds. This fifth group also has five letters in it—viz. Pa, Pha, Ba, Bha and Ma. They represent the following five aspects of creation—Purush (the Male aspect), Parkriti (Nature), Buddhi (intellect), Ahankaar (ego and pride), and Mana (mind). [These consonants are the following—‘Pa’ (प); ‘Pha’ or ‘Fa’ (फ); ‘Ba’ (ब); ‘Bha’ (भ); ‘Ma’ (म).]

The letters in a group are arranged in order of increasing subtlety—viz, the first letter within a group represents the ‘earth’ element which is grossest, and the last the ‘sky’ element which is the subtlest, with ‘water’ as the second, ‘fire’ as the third, and ‘air’ as the fourth elements in increasing levels of subtlety. Since the last word of each group stands for the ‘sky’ element, its sound is ‘nasal’ because the ‘nose’ represents the cosmic bowl where the first vibrations that sowed the seed of sound and creation originated. This will be evident when one understands that the nose is the organ where a subtle sound is generated when one breathes, even with the mouth closed.

The sound gets subtler and subtler as it proceeds laterally as well as vertically.

The next series of consonant sounds is called the ‘Antahstha’. They are the sounds of the ‘Ya’ series (as pronounced in ‘yearn’, ‘year’). There are four letters in this group, and they are—Ya, Ra, La and Va. They represent the semi-vowels of the ‘Ya’ series. The letter ‘Ya’ represents grossness associated with this world, i.e. the earth element; the letter ‘Ra’ stands for the fire element, the letter ‘La’ for the water element, and ‘Va’ for the wind or air element. [These consonants are the following—‘Ya’ (य); ‘Ra’ (र); ‘La’ (ल); ‘Va’ (व).]

According to another interpretation, the letter ‘Ya’ stands for ‘Raag’ or attachment, the letter ‘Ra’ for ‘Vidya’ or knowledge, the letter ‘La’ for ‘Kala’ or division, and ‘Va’ for ‘Maya’ or delusions.

The last series of consonant letters are called ‘Uhsma’ letters. They are produced by friction. They are the following—the three forms or variations of the basic letter ‘Sa’ (as in ‘south’), followed by ‘Ha’ (as in ‘hand’), ‘Ksha’ (which is a combination of ‘Ka’, ‘Kha’ and ‘Sa’), ‘Tra’ (which is a combination of ‘Ta’ and ‘Ra’ as in *tram*), and ‘Gya’ (which is a combination of ‘Ga’ and ‘Ya’—somewhat like in the word *gymkhana*). [These consonants are the following—‘Sha’ (श); ‘Sha’ (ष); ‘Sa’ (स); ‘Ha’ (ह); ‘Ksha’ (क्ष); ‘Tra’ (त्र) and ‘Gya’ (ज्ञ).]

The sound of breath, the harbinger of life and a synonym for ‘Pran’, the vital air or wind that sustains life in this world, is ‘Hans’. This sound is a combination of ‘Sa’ + ‘Ha’ representing inhalation and exhalation respectively. This sound also stands for the symbolic Swan, the ‘Hans’, which lives as the ‘pure consciousness’ inside the body of all living beings. It is the truthful and pure ‘self’ and the real identity of the creature. It represents Brahm in its microcosmic form.

Since the sound of ‘Sa’ represents inhalation of breath, it stands for the grosser aspect of creation as the vital life-forces move inside the gross body of the creature, while the sound of ‘Ha’ that represents exhalation stands for the upward movement of the Pran and its liberation from the cage of the gross body into the vastness of the sky outside.

Pronunciation—Now, let us list the Sanskrit alphabets and use an English word to see how they are pronounced, or how they sound. The part of the English word that corresponds to the Sanskrit alphabet is *italics* to facilitate pronunciation of the respective sound.

The vowels—

‘A’ (अ)—This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘son, rubber, hut’.

‘Aa’ (आ)—This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘master, plaster, blast’.

‘E’ (इ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘if’.

‘Ee’ (ई)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘keel, knee’.

‘U’ or ‘Oo’ (उ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*full, bull*’.

‘Uu’ or ‘Ooo’ (ऊ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*boot, moon*’.

‘Ri’ (ऋ)—This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*regard, ring*’.

‘Ae’ (ए)—This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*may, ray*’.

‘Aye’ (ऐ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*aye, my, rye*’.

‘O’ (ओ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*oh, oracle*’.

‘Ou’ or ‘Aou’ (औ) — This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*cow, now*’.

‘Ang’ (अं)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*rung*’ as well as ‘*mum*’.

‘Aha’ (अः)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*aha, ahead*’.

The consonants—

‘Ka’ (क)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*keen, kerb*’.

‘Kha’ (ख)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*blockhead, Khaki*’.

‘Ga’ (ग)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*go, give*’.

‘Gha’ (घ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘Nottingham, log-*hut*’.

‘Ang’ (ङ)—This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘singer’.

‘Cha’ (च)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘church, chain’.

‘Chha’ (छ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘catch him, ketchup’.

‘Ja’ (ज)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘judge’.

‘Jha’ (झ)—This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘hedgehog’.

‘Ieya’ (य)—This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘French’

‘Tta’ (ट)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘ten, too’.

‘Tha’ (ठ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘anthill’.

‘Da’ (ड)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘den, load’.

‘Dha’ (ढ)—This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘godhood’.

‘Ana’ (ण)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘under’.

‘Ta’ (त)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in French ‘T’.

‘Tha’ (थ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘thumb’.

‘The’ (द)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘then, them’.

‘Dha’ (ध)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘thence, breathe’.

‘Na’ (न)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘not, none’.

‘Pa’ (प)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘pluck, pen’.

‘Pha’ or ‘Fa’ (फ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘fruit, full’.

‘Ba’ (ब)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘bull, box’.

‘Bha’ (भ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘abhor’.

‘Ma’ (म)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘mother, my’.

‘Ya’ (य)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘yearn, yarn’.

‘Ra’ (र)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘rung, run’.

‘La’ (ल)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘luck, long, lame’.

‘Va’ (व)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘avert, vulgar’.

‘Sha’ (श)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*reich* (German), *shawl*’.

‘Sha’ (ष)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*show*, *shall*’.

‘Sa’ (स)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*sun*, *son*’.

‘Ha’ (ह)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*hunt*, *hut*’.

‘Ksha’ (क्ष)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*Kshatriya*’.

‘Tra’ (त्र)—This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*triangle*, *tripod*’.

‘Gya’ (ज्ञ)— This sound is almost equivalent to and pronounced roughly as in ‘*gymkhana*’.

Akshar—The word ‘Askhar’ has two meanings—viz. one, something that is imperishable, and two, a letter or alphabet. Since the spoken word consists of letters of the alphabet, it is said to consist of the Akshar. At the same time, since the primary form of the spoken word is a sound which is an ‘non-perishable’ entity as it remains in the cosmos even after the end of the existing world, the speech that depends upon these vibrations is known as Akshar.

Only a living entity speaks, and it is the ‘consciousness’ present inside the gross body that makes an entity alive. This ‘consciousness’ is a microcosmic counterpart of the cosmic Consciousness, and the latter is eternal and imperishable. The vibrations generated by this ‘Consciousness’ manifests its self as sound, both at the cosmic level in the form of Naad, and the micro level as ‘speech’. Since ‘Consciousness’ is eternal and imperishable, its inherent ability to produce vibrations, and therefore sound, is also eternal or imperishable. Hence, the spoken word consisting of units of vibrations or ‘photons of vibrations’ represented by individual alphabets is also said to be ‘Akshar’—the non-perishable.

The term is used widely in the Upanishads to indicate the imperishable/non-perishable and eternal Brahm.

The *Atharva-Shir Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition deals with this concept of ‘Akshar’ in detail in its Kandika (Canto) 6 as follows—“It is from the ‘Akshar’ that Kaal came into existence. [The word ‘Akshar’ means something that is imperishable, that does not decay and die, that is infinite, timeless and eternal, while the term ‘Kaal’ means the factor of ‘time’, a factor which implies imposition of limits because it also means an era or phase which must come to an end to pave the way for the next era or the next phase, and it also means ‘death’ because anything that is limited by time must come to an end or die, a situation which is the opposite of being imperishable and eternal. In other words, it is from the infinite, eternal and imperishable Brahm that this finite, mortal and perishable world came into being. This is because the world ‘has a beginning’ while Brahm has ‘no beginning’. It is like the case of a huge wave arising from the surface of the vast ocean, running its course and finally collapsing back on the surface of the ocean. Numerous waves appear from and disappear into the fathomless ocean, but do any of them affect the ocean? The wave has a limited life span, but is the ocean also subjected to this limitation of time? The answer is an unequivocal ‘no’. This applies also to Brahm which is like the cosmic ocean from which the numerous worlds have arisen, and in which they would vanish at the end of their life spans. ‘Akshar’ also means a letter, here indicating the ethereal word OM which stands for cosmic sound indicating the presence of vibrations in the cosmic ether symbolising primal life in the universe. Anything that is born must come to an end. It is something which is not born that is not subjected to death. Sound had its origin in the cosmic ether because of some ‘vibrations’ produced in it, and therefore there must be some dynamic energy that must have produced these vibrations in the first place. The unknown and mystical source of this energy that generated the primary vibrations in the cosmic ether, vibrations that lay the foundation and the plinth of the grand structure known as the ‘creation’, is Brahm. It is from this Brahm that Akshar (the eternal ethereal sound) was produced, and it is eternal and infinite because it would survive the end of this world as the background vibration in ether. It is from this Akshar that the new generation of world would evolve. Hence, the perishable creation that is subjected to ‘Kaal’ is created from the imperishable ‘Akshar’.]

It is because of this fact that Akshar (i.e. Brahm) is said to be eternal, infinite, all-pervading, omnipresent and all-inclusive. [The wave arising on the surface of the ocean is essentially water of the ocean and nothing else. Ocean from which the wave is created is itself water and nothing else. If there was no water, there would be no ocean, and hence no wave. So it can be safely said that the wave is a representative of the ocean. Or, that the

ocean, in its basic form as ‘water’, is present in all the waves that arise in all the parts of the ocean. Therefore, all the waves are basically and essentially the same thing having different existences and different locations in different periods of time. Similarly, it is the Akshar or letter that is present in all languages and tongues by which the world acquires knowledge, by which the scriptures were revealed, by which the individual creatures interact with each other, by which one expresses one’s thoughts, and which is a vivid sign of life in this world. Existence of life somewhere can easily be deduced on the basis of sound even though neither the former nor the latter can be physically seen, smelt, touched and tasted. This is proved by the fact that scientists train their radio telescopes to distant corners of the universe to catch any bleep of sound, say in the form of radio waves emanating from remote corners of the universe, to determine the existence of life there. In modern medicine, sound is used to determine the state of internal organs and diagnose diseases inside the body of a patient, in a process known as the Ultrasound technique. Sound is used in oceanography to research what lies in the deep bowls of the vast ocean, thousands of feet below its surface where it is impossible for man to go physically. Similarly, we can determine that there is someone behind the wall if we hear him speak or some noise is heard even though we cannot see, touch, smell or taste the source. In the present case, it is Brahm that is the timeless ‘Akshar’ which is essentially present in all the entities called ‘Kaal’ that are limited by the factor of time.]”

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About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

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The author's Books are available for order online both in 'e-book' format and 'paper-back book' format at following websites—

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(A) List of Books that are currently available as mentioned above :-

(A-1) (1) The Chariot of God: Dharma Rath; (2) OM and Naad; (3) YOGA—Its Practice and Philosophy according to the Upanishads; (4) Ram Geeta; (5) The Revelation of Creation—as envisioned in the Upanishads; (6) The Pentagon of Creation: As Expounded in the Upanishads; (7) The Triumvirate of Creation; (8) Maya: The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation; (9) Surdas-Ram Charitawali; (10-a) The legend of Lord Shiva: Book 1 'Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati'; (10-b) Book 2 'Lord Shiva's Sacred Hymns'; (10-c) Book 3 'Shiva's different names & their significance, Shiva Puran, Upanishads'; (11) the Mahavakyas of the Upanishads; (13) Lord Ram's marriage with Sita (based on Tulsidas' books "Ram Charit Manas", "Janki Mangal", "Ram Lala Nahachu" & "Geetawali", and sage Veda Vyas' book "Adhyatma Ramayan"; (14) "Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Stotras & Mantras of Lord Ram"; (15) "Vairagya Shatkam" of king-sage Bhartrihari; (16) An Anthology of the Sanyas Upanishads-Parts 1

and 2; (17) “Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan” or the “Aadi Ramayan” based on Tulsidas’ Ram Charit Manas; (18) The Legendary Glory of Hanuman; (19) “Narad Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord; (20) “Shandilya Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord according to the illustrious sage Shandilya; (21) “Bhakti Sutra Mala”—A Garland of Spiritual Wisdom in the form of an Anthology of Aphorisms pertaining to Bhakti or devotion, love and affection for Lord God; (22) Glory of Lord Ram’s Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns; (23) Saints and Non-Saints: Their Distinguishing Characters and Qualities; (24) A True Guru (Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor); (25) “Sundar Kand” of Ram Charit Manas; (26) The Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka—Told in Slow Motion (based on, and will have the full relevant Text of, Ram Charit Manas, Adhyatma Ramayan, Anand Ramayan, Geetawali Ramayan, and Kavitalawali Ramayan); (27) The Great Ancient Sages, Seers, Saints and Enlightened Kings of India; (28) The Metaphor of the Hansa in the Upanishads: The symbolism of a Grand Swan used to explain the wisdom of spiritual and metaphysical principles by the Upanishads.

(A-2) Goswami Tulsidas Series: (1) Book 1- ‘Dohawali’; (2) Book 2- ‘Parvati Mangal’; (3) Book 3- ‘Kavitalawali’; (4) Book 4- ‘Janki Mangal’; (5) Book 5- ‘Ram Lala Nahachu’; (6) Book 6- ‘Geetawali Ramayan’; (7) Book 7- ‘Vairagya Sandipani’; (8) Book 8- ‘Vinai Patrika’; (9) ‘Barvai Ramayan’.

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thousands of pages that would endeavour to explain each single verse of Ram Charit Manas in detail from different perspectives, with the aid of explanatory notes and references.

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